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EXCISE

Some Political Scenarios for Iran Over the Next 3-5 Years

Because of the numerous variables at work, e.g., a revolution still in progress, a war with Iraq, continuing political infighting, it is extremely difficult to suggest with any degree of confidence the likely near and medium-term political evolution which will take place in Iran.

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Although the present regime has succeeded in beginning some institution-building, including a constitution, a Parliament, and a partial Cabinet, much remains to be done in order to ensure the durability of a clerical revolutionary regime. Khomeini's own leadership style has in itself weakened the support which he originally enjoyed. Moreover, he tends to prevent any leader or party within the present system from gaining power to resolve national problems thereby tending to encourage an unending power struggle.

Alternatives to the present regime will be determined by the competition for power among various groups and personalities -- secular versus cleric, right versus left, etc. -- and will probably continue for a considerable period of time. New leaders will emerge who will command factions ready to bargain for a share of power. The question of whether to emphasize the nationalist aspects of the revolution, as opposed to emphasizing its Islamic nature, will probably be a subject of continuing debate. There are also likely to be challenges from Iran's various ethnic groups which will have a significant bearing on central political leadership.

There are a number of conceivable political scenarios which might take place over the next three to five years. Ranked in order of likelihood we perceive the following possibilities:

1. Despite growing anti-mullah sentiment and despite a reduced base of popular support, we believe it is quite likely that a regime dominated by clerics will survive during this period despite discontent over economic conditions and grumbling within the military. While Khomeini's personal survival makes this scenario more likely, a regime led and dominated by other clerics should not be ruled out. However, such a regime will be compelled before long to end its international isolation, which would mean resolving the hostage crisis in time to bring the war with Iraq to an acceptable conclusion from Iran's point of view. Such a regime, with or without Khomeini, would probably continue to be unstable and extremely difficult to deal with from the outside.

-- Threaten to withdraw recognition of the resolution on the grounds the present regime is unable -even after considerable U.S. restraint- to make and carry through a decision on the hostages. B1a5

-- Actually withdraw recognition and seek a better alternative, realizing our resources to achieve this objective are limited, that it would take time to effect such measures. B1a5

Relations with Exile Groups

-- Continue a hands-off policy with respect to these groups as none have real support among any significant part of the Iranian public and many, by associating themselves with Iraq and/or attacking Khomeini when criticizing the clerics, have alienated even potential supporters. B1(a)(5)

Economic Sanctions/Travel Ban

-- Continue to impose economic sanctions and press our allies to maintain their programs to "keep Iran's feet to the fire" through the imposition of real costs and continuing isolation from the world community.

-- Maintain our sanctions as part of a policy of doing no business with Iran, but permit our allies to resume trade and the provision of services to Iran to partly end Iran's isolation and allow some repair of sanctions/war/revolution caused damage to the economy. Ask the allies to continue to condemn the hostage-taking and otherwise support our efforts to refuse to bargain with terrorists and/or those governments that condone terrorists.

-- Continue the present restrictions on Iranian travel to the U.S. recognizing this causes a hardship to many who are firm friends and supporters and precludes useful business, professional and artistic exchanges.



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